

Groundbreaking for the New River Valley Airport

Runway Rehabilitation Project

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July 7, 2010

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I am pleased to return to the New River Valley Airport this morning to break ground on a significant federally funded improvement to the airport's runway.

The New River Valley Airport is vital to our region's economy. It ships or receives more than 180,000 pounds of cargo each year, but that activity has caused wear and tear on the airport's runway. Currently, the airport's runway, which is the region's longest at 6,201 feet, has cracks through which grass is growing and is in urgent need of repair to ensure that aircraft are able to continue to use the airport and that residents of the New River Valley continue to benefit from the flow of commerce through the region that the airport enables. The last time the runway was repaved was twenty years ago, and that was only a partial resurfacing.

To address these concerns, I have been actively working with airport officials for a number of years to secure the federal funds necessary for a major rehabilitation of the airport's runway. In 2007, Congress approved at my request an allocation of \$400,000 for the runway rehabilitation project, and again in 2009, Congress approved an allocation of \$475,000 I requested. The Federal Aviation Administration has provided the remaining federal funds

necessary for the runway rehabilitation at my urging, bringing the total federal funding allocated for this project to \$4,738,298.

With the benefit of the federal funds, the entire length of 6,201 feet and width of 150 feet of the airport's runway will be covered with a new asphalt surface. Grading and leveling will be completed so that the runway complies with new FAA safety standards. In addition, one of the runway's turn-offs will be redesigned to accommodate a future taxiway extension, and new lighted runway distance-remaining signs and visual landing aids will be installed.

The total cost of the runway rehabilitation project is \$4,988,298. In addition to the \$4.7 million in federal funding provided at my request, the Virginia Division of Aviation is providing \$149,649 toward the project, and the New River Valley Airport Commission and the Industrial Development Authorities of Pulaski, Montgomery and Giles Counties and the City of Radford are providing a total of \$99,766.

The rehabilitation of the New River Valley Airport's runway will improve the safety of the aircraft landing and taking off from the airport, ensuring that the airport remains a critical part of the region's economic activity. The presence of a well-developed airport is essential to our economic development goals for Southwest Virginia, making the region more attractive to businesses seeking to expand operations into new areas and assisting locally owned businesses operate on a larger scale. The runway rehabilitation that begins today will help us achieve these goals.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a number of individuals whose efforts have been critical to bringing the runway rehabilitation project to construction.

I want to thank Keith Holt, New River Valley Airport Manager, for his tireless efforts to improve the airport and keep it running efficiently.

I also want to thank Nick Glenn, Chair of the Airport Commission, and the other members of the commission for their longstanding work to benefit the airport.

Terry Page with the Federal Aviation Administration has provided excellent assistance to the New River Valley Airport, and I want to thank him for his efforts at this time.

I also want to thank Pete Huber, Pulaski County Administrator, for his work toward the airport rehabilitation project.

Joe Sheffey, Chairman of the Pulaski County Board of Supervisors, and the other members of the Board deserve our thanks today for their hard work on behalf of Pulaski County residents.

I also want to thank the members of the Industrial Development Authorities of Pulaski, Montgomery and Giles Counties and the City of Radford for their contribution to the project.

Finally, I would like to thank my Project Manager, Derek Lyall, for his work on behalf of airports throughout our region.

The runway rehabilitation project on which construction begins today will tremendously benefit the economy of the New River Valley. Today's success is truly an example of what can be achieved when citizens and government officials on the federal, state and local levels work together in aid of a common purpose. For that cooperation and successful work, I want to congratulate all here.